



Chapter I

The Visual Arts and the Theatre in Early Modern Europe

Caroline van Eck and Stijn Bussels

Art, Theatre and Theatricality

From its earliest beginnings, the theatre has borrowed elements from architecture, painting and other visual arts to stage and perform plays, ranging from the primitive wooden scaffoldings used in Athens in the fifth century BCE to perform Bacchic plays to the elaborate perspectival backdrops with their suggestion of infinite space developed in the eighteenth century by the Galli-Bibbiena family. Conversely, the arts have depicted theatrical actions such as the lifting of a curtain to stage what is represented in a painting, and imported gestures, costumes or entire stagings of a scene from the theatre. Venetian painting offers some of the best-known cases, for instance in Veronese's use of Palladian architectural backdrops for his large Biblical scenes. His *Feast in the House of Levi*, painted in 1573 (plate 2) was described by Carlo Ridolfi in the seventeenth century as a 'maestoso Teatro', and in the nineteenth century the painter was still praised as a superb stage manager; Ridolfi also described the action of Titian's *Crowning with Thorns* as taking place in a theatre.¹ But already in the sixteenth-century plays and joyous entries in Flanders drew on famous paintings such as Jan van Eyck's *Lamb of God* (1425–29) to provide a compositional framework for their staging of *tableaux vivants*. Such relatively straightforward cases of exchange and borrowing are well documented and the questions they have raised are mainly those of influence or adaptation of originals to new uses in a different medium.

But the inclusion of theatrical elements in a work of art is rarely simply a matter of borrowing a costume, gesture or compositional feature. Even in Veronese's *Feast in the House of Levi* the use of a stage, which at first sight seems to be a straightforward case of a painter employing a theatrical feature, fundamentally affects both the composition of the painting and the way it is viewed. The composition of Veronese's paintings depicting feasts, weddings or the Last Supper use architectonic backdrops that are very close to reconstructions by Serlio and Palladio of Roman theatrical backdrops as described by Vitruvius (plate 2).² These are not representations of actual buildings or urban spaces, because they cannot be reconstructed as such, but illusionist stage settings; they signal that the viewer is looking at the enactment of some drama.³ At the same time they are not simply dramatic scenes represented as if on stage: Veronese handled the sacred and the secular, the elevated and the mundane, in a subtle way that could not have been achieved on a real stage. In the *Feast in the House of Levi* there is no central, unified linear perspective; instead each zone of the painting obeys a different visual order, probably because a unified perspectival system imposed on such a vast scene would look very unnatural. The receding orthogonals are broken,

Detail from Titian, *Death of Actaeon*, 1562. (plate 6).

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I Sebastiano Serlio, Design for the scenery of a comedy, from Sebastiano Serlio, *Libro I-VI d'architettura*, Vicenza: Jac. de' Franceschi, 1584, f. 45v. Photo: Leiden University.

scene of the opera *La Torilda*, first performed in Venice in 1648, the legendary musician Amphyon appears in a loggia near a marina, decorated with statues. He enters the stage riding a dolphin, singing praises to the goddess Venus and of love's power to set stones afire. The statues in the loggia are brought to life by Amphyon's song, and the work is concluded with a *ballo delle statue* – a dance of the statues. Thus, in an operatic realm in which everyday speech is elevated to song, statues express their inherent theatricality through the most sophisticated language of the body – dance. This example points to

which prevents the composition from being taken in at one glance; only once all parts of the scene depicted have been absorbed can the spectator form an idea of the composition as a whole. Thus the spatial, two-dimensional, pictorial representation of an event is transformed into a narrative unfolding in the spectator's act of looking.

The Feast in the House of Levi thus points to one important implication of the use of theatrical elements in a work of art: the use of a stage signals to the viewer that he or she should look at what is represented as a viewer of a play, that is, as somebody who watches the unfolding of a play in the course of an evening. It does not show the events it depicts as static, frozen in the eternal present of *historia sacra* in the way many late medieval crucifixions, *pietàs* or annunciations do, but as a narrative. Depicting a situation or event as if it takes place on a stage also stages the way the viewer looks at it.

Introducing the visual arts in a theatrical performance is not a mere matter of mixing media or genres either. In the final



2 Paolo Veronese, *The Feast in the House of Levi*, 1573. Oil on canvas, 555 × 1280 cm. Venice: Gallerie dell'Accademia. Photo: CKD Nijmegen.

two recurring features of exchanges between the theatre and the arts: they undermine established distinctions between the arts, and they suggest transgressions of the boundaries between representation and presence. The inanimate statues in *La Torilda* become living beings, and their immobility is transformed into song.

In Venetian early modern opera statues could become living and moving actors on the stage; but in the courtly theatres built in Florence, Parma and Vicenza in the sixteenth century, statues of rulers were placed in the theatrical space to observe both the play and the audience. In the Farnese theatre in Parma an equestrian statue of the prince was installed in the theatre. In Sabbioneta a statue of the emperor Vespasian was positioned directly behind the seat of the Gonzaga ruler who shared his name with the emperor, as a visual reminder of the model the prince claimed – or was expected – to follow. But sometimes the prince himself became a theatre, a place to view the enactment of princely virtue, as the dedication of the treatise by the architect Giovanni Battista Aleotti bears out: ‘As is well known, Your Highness is a living theatre’, he wrote to his patron Ranuccio I of Parma, ‘in whom all heroic virtues represent magnanimous and generous actions’.⁴ For human beings, being theatrical in this context meant literally that they were a theatre, a place where their character was on display for all to see.

These examples all suggest that exchanges and borrowings between the visual arts and the theatre are not simply a matter of exchanges of media or genres. They affect the way a play, painting or statue is viewed, the relations between the media, genres and arts involved, and the characters on stage or represented in painting or sculpture. They raise questions about the ways genres are demarcated and defined, the relations between media, the way plays and art works are viewed, and ultimately the relation between representation and presence.

The relations between the theatre and the visual arts have been studied mainly in two ways, one concentrating on the actual relations between these arts, the other taking its departure in the concept of theatricality. Inspired by the topos of the *theatrum mundi* and the *paragone*, the first, more historically oriented approach, has rarely moved beyond documenting and studying individual cases of the use of theatrical elements

in the arts. Architectural history illustrates this well: whereas it is acknowledged that there exist unmistakable connections between the work of Veronese and Tintoretto and the architectural designs of Peruzzi, Serlio and Palladio; between French eighteenth-century public architecture and the theatre; or between the stage designs of the Galli-Bibbiena and the etchings of Piranesi, research has rarely moved beyond documenting these similarities.⁵

Theatricality is a concept with many meanings; ambiguity is a constant feature of its use. On one side of its semantic spectrum it simply refers to anything pertaining to the theatre, from the props to the script; at the other extreme it is a heavily laden ethical and political term. Prior to the second century AD, the Greek *thea* (derived from the verb *theaomai*, to gaze with admiration or bewilderment, or to contemplate) and its cognate *theatron* were used to identify the distinctive visual characteristics of the theatre. *Thea* refers to the act of seeing something, including the act of seeing involved in attending a spectacle or performance, but also to contemplation (hence our term 'theory').⁶ The word was also used to name the actual spectacle or performance itself, whether staged in the theatre or elsewhere, and also the place from which a spectacle or performance is seen, such as a seat in the theatre or even the auditorium in general. From the second century AD, however, words derived from *thea* start to be used not only to point to the visual characteristics of the theatre, but also to refer to exaggeration, distortion and deceit. In his *Anthologies*, the Hellenistic astrologer Vettius Valens (c. 120–c. 175 AD) uses the term *theatrodes* pejoratively for persons of exaggerated behaviour (14.27).⁷

This negative understanding of the theatre has a long history. Ultimately it goes back to Plato's famous anti-theatrical, or rather, anti-mimetic, arguments in the tenth book of the *Republic*. Plato attacked what he saw as the theatre's distortion of reality. One of the greatest dangers of the theatre was that the audience might mistake the fictitious world of the tragedy for the truth. All artistic mimesis, but certainly the mimesis of tragedy, is for Plato, 'a corruption of the mind of all listeners who do not possess as antidote a knowledge of its real nature' (*Republic* 595B).⁸ The excesses shown on stage habituate the audience to them, and therefore affect the norms and values of the polis. Moreover, the audience is not conscious that their understanding is distorted. Its modes of evaluation and analysis militate against genuine philosophical understanding.

The term theatricality is first documented in English in 1711, and in French somewhat later. From its introduction, it did not refer to such exchanges in a neutral way, but had clear moral connotations. In his instructions to the painter, published in 1711 in *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, Shaftesbury prescribes that he should start from observations when the subject is behaving in a natural way and thus not playing a social role:

Such study'd Action, and artificial Gesture, may be allow'd to the Actors and Actresses of the Stage. But the good Painter must come a little nearer to Truth, and take care that his Action be not theatrical.⁹

In French, the term *théâtral* was used in the early modern period to name situations or objects directly related to the theatre. At the end of the seventeenth century it came to be connected with the exaggeration and affectation attributed to the theatre, and used in the sense of 'amplifié, exagéré, comme ce qui se fait au théâtre', the opposite of natural social interaction.¹⁰ Just as in the passage by Lord Shaftesbury quoted above, theatricality becomes associated with everything unreal and unnatural, with conscious deceit, not only of the audience in the theatre but of society at large,

and even with a loss of self. In his *Lettre à M. D'Alembert* of 1758, Rousseau made the influential argument that the middle classes and courtiers function as actors: they play a social role which they hope will promote their interests. However, these persons have to pay a very high price for such behaviour, since they tarnish their 'pure' and 'natural' self and ultimately risk isolation and mental derangement. They may lose not only their true self, but also all sense of true reality. The theatre, just as the visual arts, pretends to present something natural and therefore infects the true and natural by lies and deceit. This harms the psyche of both actors and audience.¹¹

When German and Russian theatre historians introduced the term 'Theatralität/teatral'nost', their approaches ranged from a narrow historical one to a wider, anthropological view. Two books published early in the twentieth century were fundamental for all subsequent analyses of theatricality. Georg Fuchs set out in *Die Revolution des Theaters* of 1909 to identify the elements that distinguish theatre from other art forms. Theatricality for him was the totality of material or sign systems used in a performance, apart from the text. But a year earlier Nikolai Evreinov had given a very influential definition of the other axis. In *Apology of Theatricality* he had developed a concept of theatricality as a pre-aesthetic instinct at work in all parts of society and culture. Whereas this definition is too wide to be useful, Evreinov was the first to think about ways in which the concept of the theatre can be defined and used as a cultural model. Concentrating on the work leads to a factual view along the lines of Fuchs, concentrating on the spectator to a wider, social or ethical notion of theatricality in the tradition of Shaftesbury or Evreinov.¹²

In art history the implications of thinking about a work of art in terms of a play performed in front of an audience have been the subject of many studies of theatricality over the past decades. Richard Wollheim for instance, in *Painting as an Art* (1987), offered theatrical concepts such as the external and internal spectator as ways of understanding what the viewer does. For him, theatricality functions as a heuristic device to help us understand the interaction between art and its viewers. Michael Fried's *Absorption and Theatricality* of 1980, on the other hand, took a critical view of the interdependence between a theatrically conceived work of art and its viewers. Within theatre studies many attempts have recently been made to define theatricality, both in technical and disciplinary ways that stay close to the theatre as a medium, and in ways that present the theatre as a metaphor through which to study society as a whole.¹³

The general impression created by recent studies on theatricality, however, is that of a dead end. Either the term has become so wide and all-embracing that it has become meaningless, or it is too narrowly based on a critique of the literally spectacular character of art works conceived in theatrical terms, and hence too much connected to late-modernist critiques of such theatricality, to be a useful instrument to study other varieties of the interaction between the arts and the theatre.¹⁴ Depending on the meaning of the term one favours, even the theatre itself is not automatically theatrical, nor are works of art using elements taken from the theatre for that reason alone theatrical. As Josette Feral put it recently, to understand theatricality we need a double focus: the work on the stage and the spectator.¹⁵

In other words, a conceptual slippage tends to occur when a work of art is called 'theatrical': between its technical meaning as referring to all the elements that make up the theatre as a medium, and the wider social and moral phenomenon of theatricality as an awareness of acting a part or appearing in front of an audience, with all the connotations of unnaturalness, play-acting, lack of spontaneity, or artificiality this brings with it. This tends to affect current work, and in fact obscures much that distinguishes early modern uses of theatrical elements in the visual arts. But as the case

studies collected in this book show, such use in works of art or buildings predating the 1750s rarely raises the issue of theatricality in the moral sense that subsequently became so conspicuous. It would exceed the boundaries of this book to investigate in depth the reasons for this discomfort with falsity, but the chapters by Hermans and Delbeke do give some precise indications of the actual manner in which such ethical concerns became attached to the theatre: because of the presentation of public figures such as princes or popes as public stagings of virtue in a rather literal way.

Instead of taking a modern definition of theatricality as our point of departure we began here by studying the implications of the use of four elements that define early modern theatre: the scenario, the actor, the theatrical space, and the audience. The theatricality of art, we might say, resides in the implications of its use of theatrical elements. But unlike previous studies of such uses we did not stop by cataloguing and documenting them, but instead have taken them as the foundation for further inquiries. These include ontological issues of presence and representation; the poetics of pictorial narration; the boundaries between genres, media and arts; and virtually every use of theatrical elements presented here raises questions about the relations between works of art and their viewers, and about how the work of art stages the act of viewing.

The Use of Theatrical Elements in the Arts and their Implications

Theatrical Space

Exchanges between the theatre and the arts began at the very birth of Greek theatre, when architecture provided the scaffolding for the temporary stages on which comedies and tragedies were performed.¹⁶ In the sixteenth century Peruzzi and Serlio designed urban and pastoral views to serve as the backdrop for plays, and conversely, fifteenth- and sixteenth-century paintings used such architectural stage sets as the backgrounds or settings of the *historia* they put before the viewer. Veronese's large Biblical scenes are probably the best-known instances of the use of architecture to provide a stage in this way. These paintings point to one important implication of the use of theatrical elements in a work of art: the use of a stage signals to the viewer that he or she should look at what is represented as a viewer of a play, that is, as somebody who watches the unfolding of a play.

In his contribution to this book, Marc Bayard argues against an approach to the exchanges between theatre and the arts in terms of influence, originality and imitation or appropriation. The implications of the use of elements which constitute a theatrical space, such as the stage, a backdrop or proscenium, are further articulated by introducing a distinction between referential and processional theatricality. In referential theatricality scenic elements in a painting, in particular perspectival architectural backdrops, clearly refer to stage sets that were in existence before the painting was made, or to general types of stage sets, such as the backdrops designed by Serlio in the 1550s, for tragic and comic scenes (plate 2). In the second variety the viewing process is structured by the painting's composition in a way that is similar to a theatrical *mise en scène*. The best-known and most evident instance of this is the figure of the witness or intermediary, a figure who looks out of the painting at the beholder, or points to what happens in the image. Alberti was the first Renaissance theorist to suggest in his *De Pictura* (1435/6) to include such a figure when depicting a *historia*, a story taken from the Bible, ancient history or classical mythology. In the near-contemporary *Trinità* by Masaccio in Santa Maria Novella in Florence (1425–28), Mary looks at the viewer

while at the same time pointing at her crucified son. Alberti's advice echoes the rhetorical doctrine that in the *actio*, the delivery of a speech, the orator should strive for maximum persuasiveness. *Enargeia*, vividness that makes what is represented in speech seem present before the eyes of the audience, could be achieved by words, but if the situation allowed, also by silent, visual, means such as gesture: 'In gesture, the body talks', as Cicero put it.¹⁷

At the same time, the use in paintings, buildings, or joyous entries of formal elements related to the theatre also suggests something further: that every space outside the theatre may be turned into a theatrical space. Already in ancient Greece, the architectural constructions on which the audience was seated were very similar to the scaffoldings for the participants in discussions concerning the *polis*. In late medieval and early modern Europe a parallel between the constructions of the theatre and public political discourse can be made too. No separate place was created as in ancient Greece, but during joyous entries where new political constellations were presented architectural constructions, such as triumphal arches, reshaped the city centre. This architectural framing of the city made clear that everyday reality was transcended and that a privileged locus of political negotiation had come into being. George Kernodle has suggested that the constructions for joyous entries heavily relied on architectural 'showpieces' such as funerary monuments. He puts the emphasis on a one-way communication from architecture to the theatre.¹⁸ However, it is more appropriate to see these architectural constructions as part of a concerted, multi-media effort to achieve the most effective communication, which is discernibly at work in both funerary monuments and ephemeral constructions for joyous entries. To put it more generally, the question which medium has historical priority in the use of a certain element for the first time, is often hard to solve and just as often irrelevant.

Stijn Bussels' chapter on the communicative power of *tableaux vivants* in joyous entries from the southern Netherlands makes clear that it is hard to label the characteristics of these *tableaux* 'theatrical' or 'pictorial', since in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the theatre, painting and *tableaux vivants* used similar features and attempted in related ways to persuade their onlookers as effectively as possible. Laura Weigert's chapter raises a similar issue. She focuses on mystery plays and tapestries depicting the popular theme of the vengeance on Jerusalem for the crucifixion of Christ. Concentrating on both media, she does not identify influences and exchanges, but observes that they share a similar mode of representation. Weigert shows that the two media relied on a similar kind of participation by the beholder, and both called attention to their mimetic artifice.

Even when there is a received opinion about a theatrical element that painters took over, it is much more productive to trace the resulting transformations than to debate questions of priority. In Emmanuelle Hénin's chapter the pictorial use of the theatrical prop *par excellence*, the curtain, is reconstructed. She shows that the arts did not borrow the use of this prop from the theatre, but the other way around. From the 1550s, theatres took from painting the use of a painted curtain to unveil the space where the play was to be enacted. It served as a marker of fictional space. Sometimes, scenes within the play were unveiled to give particular emphasis to their fictional character, twice-removed from extratheatrical reality. Introducing painted curtains into a painting implies a certain auto-referentiality: the viewer is made doubly aware that what he or she is looking at is a representation re-represented. But also underlined is the spectacular nature shared by the theatre and the visual arts and their common task of presenting a scene to the viewer.



3 Herri met de Bles, *Landscape with the Journey to Emmaus*, c. 1550. Oil on wood, 34.1 x 50.5 cm. Antwerp: Museum Mayer van den Bergh. Photo: Beeldarchief Collectie Antwerpen.

narrative is discussed in terms of *ut pictura poesis* or the paragone, but the chapters by Kati Röttger and Bram Van Oostveldt addressing theatrical narrativity in the visual arts and gardening argue that this traditional contextualization should be reconsidered. In the 1750s and 1760s, the same period the term theatricality acquired a more or less stable ethical and moralistic meaning, the relation between painting and poetry was radically redefined. In his influential essay on the Laocoön of 1766, Lessing reacts against the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis* by focusing on the intrinsic differences between painting and poetry. He limits painting to spatial representations. Whereas poetry is an art unfolding in time – and as so often in comparisons of poetry and painting based on Horace, by poetry is meant above all dramatic poetry – a painting or sculpture can represent only one moment, and has to be comprehended in one glance. According to Lessing, choosing the ‘most pregnant moment’ is the only way to put a narrative before the viewer’s eye. By depicting an event carefully, its past and future can be suggested. In her chapter in this book, Röttger goes deeper into the consequences of Lessing’s thoughts. By focusing on his play *Emilia Galotti*, she shows how Lessing deals with the theatre and painting as rivals in performing and/or imagining Emilia.

However, before Lessing, many visual artists experimented with ways to overcome this opposition by attempting to convey the temporal aspects of the events or situations they represented. Sixteenth-century landscape painters from the Low Countries, for example, constructed their compositions in such a way that the beholder was obliged to build up his observations in a temporal sequence. In the generation of Pieter Brueghel the Elder (and also of Italian painters like Veronese and their experiments with interrupted perspectives), landscapes directed the beholder’s gaze in time and led gradually to a final insight. Herri met de Bles’ *Landscape with the Journey to Emmaus* (c. 1550), for instance, shows an impressive landscape in which the beholder gradually discerns the path to Emmaus. The biblical journey is depicted in such a way that it suggests spiritual enlightenment (plate 3).¹⁹ In the same generation, graphic artists such as Maarten Van Heemskerck were inspired by the format of theatrical processions.²⁰ Just as on the floats, an allegorical Everyman was represented in successive prints

The Scenario

If paintings can resemble the theatre in that they stage a play, or a scene from a *historia*, the similarity often goes much further than using the compositional device or motif of a stage curtain, or a stage on which actors enter, move, gesture and exit. Many early modern paintings also show clear similarities with theatrical scenarios in the way they build up a narrative. Traditionally, such pictorial use of



4 Titian, *Annunciation*, 1562–64.
Oil on canvas, 403 × 235 cm.
Venice: San Salvatore. Photo:
CKD Nijmegen.

showing the story's most decisive moments. In his series *The Miserable Fate of the Rich* (1563), for example, Heemskerck is inspired by the Antwerp procession, the *Ommegang*, and similarly shows by means of personifications the different ways a rich man can be tempted to abuse his richness.

Although Italian Renaissance painters rarely spoke of their work in theatrical or even poetical terms, the similarities between their work and the theatre were often noted. Titian's *San Salvatore Annunciation*, painted in 1562–64 (plate 4), for instance, breaks with the Renaissance tradition of representing this event as a private encounter between Mary and the Angel by giving it a dramatic staging that is very close to Aretino's description in his *Vita di Santa Maria*, a series of episodes from the life of Mary presented as *tableaux vivants*. There he wrote of the protagonists that they gesture as Titian would have painted them. In the *Humanità di Christo* (1539), a life of Christ in the form of a series of *tableaux vivants*, he even mentions a 'theatre of clouds'.²¹ When discussing *ordine*, one of the main aspects of *disegno* or pictorial composition, the sixteenth-century Venetian art theorist Lodovico Dolce argued that painters should take care to observe chronological order in the *istoria* or narrative they depict. The classical authority quoted is Aristotle's *Poetics*.²²

Such Aristotelian reactions were not exclusively Venetian. In *Il Figino* (1591), the art critic Gregorio Comanini argued, following Aristotle's *Poetics*, that both drama and painting should represent one single action or plot. The most highly regarded genres of painting (history and religious painting, not landscape, still-life

or portraiture) resemble poetry because, like poetry, they represent plots or stories and offer visual narrative. As an example he took Raphael's fresco of the *Fire in the Borgo* in the Vatican (1514; plate 5), and argued that although Raphael included some details that recalled the fire of Troy, it did represent a unified narrative.²³

In *The Death of Actaeon* (1562; plate 6), Titian did not depict separate scenes from the myth, but collapsed two successive moments into a single scene. On the left we see Diana shooting an arrow at Actaeon; her hand is still on the string of her bow but the arrow is already flying. In the centre, however, we see Actaeon already in the process of transformation: his head is changed into that of a stag, and Diana's hounds are tearing at his legs, which are turning into those of the animal he is becoming. This distillation of a well-known myth into the pivotal moment of its plot, or its most pregnant and meaningful point, engages the spectator's attention because it breaks with accustomed linear progress and thus becomes a rhetorically powerful means of visual persuasion. At the same time it helps the spectator to identify with what happens because Titian's conflation of Diana's shot and Actaeon's transformation force the viewer to re-enact in his or her mind the process which is so selectively represented. Thomas Puttfarcken argued that Titian, in representing these *istorie*, selected precisely those moments from the story that are the crucial moments of the

plot, scenes of recognition and *periegesis*. Such selection of pivotal moments may be read as corresponding to Aristotle's analysis in the *Poetics* that Greek viewers of the tragedies were aware that they were looking at selected scenes from the myths on which they were based.²⁴

Such use of narrative devices, combined with staging, was not limited to the visual arts. As Sigrid de Jong shows in her chapter, early visitors to the ancient Greek ruins in Paestum used theatrical techniques of representation to record the buildings. They were highly selective in what they depicted, suggested the passing of time and the unfolding of a narrative: that of initial expectations, deception and even terror when confronted with these uncouth heaps of stone, followed by attempts to assimilate Paestum into the canon of classical architecture, or acceptance that the ruins were simply remains from a past that was now lost. Here as well, the way the representation is staged directs the way the viewer should look at the records made of the temples, just as there was a conventional sequence of observation and affect that visitors to the site itself were obliged to feel they had undergone.

Sometimes, a painting could become part of an elaborate scenario that regulated the way it should be viewed. This scenario could become so detailed and rule-bound that it almost became a ritual, and the work of art could draw on already existing religious and political ritual practices. In the case of the portrait of the Venetian patrician Bianca Capello, which Elsje van Kessel discusses in her chapter, the owner of the painting Francesco Bembo developed an elaborate viewing scenario. It began with him gazing at the painting at set times; next he allowed his wife and relatives to view, touch, and kiss it; then it made an entry at his dinner table; finally, tours through the city were staged, ending with an official visit of the portrait to the Doge.

5 Raphael, *The Fire in the Borgo*, 1514. Fresco, width at base 670 cm. Rome: Vatican, Stanza dell'Incendio di Borgo. Photo: CKD Nijmegen.





6 Titian, *Death of Actaeon*, 1562. Oil on canvas, 179 × 189 cm. London: National Gallery. Photo: National Gallery.

The Actor

Staging the viewing of this painting, and creating a scenario for the behaviour of the public, clearly directed the way the viewers should behave in this case. But it also points to another implication of the use of theatrical elements in a painting, since in painting, as in the theatre, the boundaries between representation and presence are less clear-cut than in ordinary life. Such ambiguity could be the result of the use of theatrical gestures like the lifting of a curtain to signal a new series within the action. This action paradoxically suggests that the play in the play thus indicated is somehow less real than the primary theatrical performance of which it is part. But more often the locus of this oscillation between presence and representation is the body of the actor. Actors both act their roles and in that sense offer a representation,

but at the same time are present on the stage in their own bodies. In many respects Aby Warburg was the first art historian to consider interactions between the theatre and the visual arts from an ontological perspective, but he did not follow up the tantalizing remarks he made in his published works.²⁵

The chapter by Lex Hermans reconstructs various degrees of ambiguity between bodily presence and theatrical representation. In the courtly theatres built in Florence, Parma and Vicenza in the sixteenth century, statues of rulers were placed in the theatrical space to observe both the play and the audience. In the Farnese theatre in Parma an equestrian statue of the prince was located in the theatre. In Sabbioneta a statue of the emperor Vespasian was positioned directly behind the seat of the Gonzaga ruler who shared his name with the emperor, as a visual reminder of the model the prince claimed – or was expected – to follow. But sometimes, as we have seen, the prince himself became a theatre, a place to view the enactment of princely virtue.

Wendy Heller, too, discusses the use of statues in the theatre. She concentrates on performances with scenes, popular in seventeenth-century Venetian opera, in which statues dance, and argues that these statues were put on stage in order to present a repertory of mythological and historical personages, as well as to give the opera an aura of antiquity. But these scenes featuring actors performing the role of inanimate sculptures which come alive also inserted sculpture within discourses on the living presence of art. So once again, a theatrical ambiguity of the bodily presence of actors and the personages they perform was at stake.

Maarten Delbeke also deals with statues, although in urban space. He shows that for Pope Alexander VII deciding whether to have a statue erected in his honour on the Campidoglio, or deciding whether to live not only in the Vatican but also in a town palace on the Quirinal, became primarily a matter of being seen to act in a certain way. Ultimately the question of both the Pope's images and their physical presence in Rome was judged in terms of the way he played his papal role. Whereas the theatricality of Baroque Rome is usually conceived rather literally as a series of spaces presented as stage sets, of which Giambattista Falda's *Il nuovo teatro delle fabbriche, et edifici, in prospettiva di Roma moderna* (1665–69) is a prime example, Delbeke shows in a more fine-grained analysis how Rome, and in particular the Campidoglio and Quirinal, became a silent actor in the performance of the Papal presence.

When public life is considered as acting and being seen to act, the role proper to one's station in life, having a portrait painted also becomes an intensely theatrical act. Like the urban spaces in which the pope performed his public roles, a portrait – as Hanneke Grootenboer puts it in her chapter – provides a space in which the sitter, placed in a *mise-en-scène* and surrounded by meaningful props, presents him or herself to the public as a subject, and a self that can be read. Hermans and Delbeke discuss cases of public role acting in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, where the focus is on the public persona, and a person's function or position – as prince, pope or condottiere – takes precedence over the individual, let alone the private, self. But in Grootenboer's analysis of seventeenth-century Dutch portraits the ultimate question is in what manner theatricality may help us to understand such presentation of the self as subject. Theatricality in her case refers to the performative character of self-presentation. Sitting for a portrait is a theatrical act in the original sense of the word *thea*, because one offers oneself to the gaze first of the painter and next of the viewer, but also in the sense that such sitting, like any act of theatrical representation, can be structured, ritualized and staged with varying degrees of consciousness and elaboration. The oscillation between presence and representation provides the conceptual space in which to elucidate how the self as the subject of a portrait is staged and understood.

The Audience

Performing one's social or political role and sitting for a portrait can be related to playing a role in drama, since they share its quality of unfolding over time and its fictional aspects. In all these cases the role-player takes on, selects, or constructs a role or public aspect that does not coincide entirely with what one might consider the core of one's being. Acting on stage, playing a role, character or public function in public or private life, all share a certain degree of fictionality, in the sense that something is shaped, presented or made that is not real. The Latin root of fiction, *fingere* , means to shape, form or fashion, but also, in its extended sense, to contrive, devise or invent. The fictional character of performances on the stage, in public and private life, or in the arts, is often signalled by the use of framing devices. De Jong's chapter on visual representations of Paestum using the conventions of theatre sets or landscape paintings documents a straightforward use of framing devices in the literal sense of selecting and fixating a viewpoint. Put in slightly different terms, if fiction is a way of organizing experience, theatricality may be said to be a way of organizing visual representation in relation to a viewer.²⁶

But as the chapters by Röttger and Van Oostveldt show, from the 1760s onwards the fictional nature of theatrical performance became increasingly rejected as unnatural and therefore immoral. Another meaning of *fingere* can be invoked here: to pretend, to pose and to act insincerely. The overt organization of experience is evaluated as being 'pure fiction', too far removed from reality. Whereas for the Italian rulers and popes, or even the Dutch burghers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, playing a role was part of being a public being, eighteenth-century German and French audiences began to see such contrivance or artificiality as immoral because flouting a stable self, and as the symptom of the ultimate modern sickness: alienation from oneself.

With regard to this issue, Denis Diderot strikes a completely different tone. By putting the emphasis on the active role of the audience, he moves the discussion from an ethical to an aesthetic context, most tellingly in the famous passage on Joseph Vernet's landscape paintings shown in the Salon of 1767 (plate 7).²⁷ Visitors to the popular biannual exhibition had to become absorbed in the works. They had to



7 Joseph Vernet, *Shepherd in the Alps*, c. 1760. Oil on canvas, 78 x 112 cm. Tours: Musée des Beaux-Arts. Photo: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours.

abstract themselves from the overpopulated exhibition room, ignore the other paintings on the overloaded walls, and concentrate on a single one of the paintings by imagining that they were actually part of that painting. At that moment fictionalization comes in, for Diderot's readers are urged to follow the example of the author who imagines himself walking in the depicted landscapes with a local *abbé* and his pupils (figures not represented in Vernet's paintings). They might even try to enter into a fictive conversation with this interlocutor, which they often interrupt to admire the beautiful vistas. Diderot does not restrict himself to the two dimensions and the timelessness of painting. Instead, he becomes an actor who is looking and being looked at while walking in a natural setting. The fact that the philosopher chose landscape painting to explain this imaginary entrance into a landscape makes it part of the discussion, at the time, of landscapes and gardens in theatrical terms. Moreover, as Van Oostveldt makes clear, in real landscapes the onlookers are both actor and beholder, since they are both admiring their surroundings and at the same time aware of the gaze of others. This is also the case for the walkers in Diderot's fiction, since in the Vernet passage the *abbé* says he is not only an onlooker, but exclaims he is Adrienne Le Couvreur, one of the most famous actresses of that time.²⁸

Conclusion

Understanding the theatricality of the arts in early modern Europe, we argue in this collection, is therefore not simply a matter of documenting exchanges between artistic and theatrical media and genres. In the preceding section we have traced some of the implications use of theatrical elements had for paintings, statues, buildings, gardens, and urban ensembles. When we try to summarize these implications, a few points stand out that may also serve to indicate new avenues of research. The concept of theatricality is fundamentally unstable, but in the definitions specifically addressing relations between the theatre and the arts developed from the early decades of the eighteenth century, one element remains constant: that of duplication and self-referentiality, self-consciousness or even an infinite regress. Duplication occurs because works of art use elements from the theatre that are in themselves visual, such as stage sets, gestures, or framing devices. But the implication of the use of such elements is another, more abstract duplication: representational elements from the theatre are represented in works of art. The chapters by Hénin, Heller and Bayard illustrate the meta-representational implications, *mise-en-abyme* or infinite regress to which such use can lead. Ultimately, this can lead to the same kind of reflexivity the term theatricality itself has when used to define the theatre. But one of the major implications of the use of theatrical elements in the arts and the duplication or reflexivity it brings with it, is that several boundaries and distinctions that we tend to consider as essential to the arts are undermined: that between the genres to begin with, but also that between the work

of art and the public, between representation and presence, and between fiction and reality.

Looking more closely at the use of theatrical elements in the visual arts of early modern Europe therefore also leads to a revision of the significance of two concepts that have guided much research on early modern exchanges: the *paragone* and the *theatrum mundi* topos. Instead of reinforcing the similarity, or fundamental equivalence they both suggest between the theatre and the world outside it, the various contributions to this book point in another direction. They indicate that there is no equality or equal exchange between the two; rather the implication of the arguments offered here is that, at the moment theatrical elements are introduced into the arts, the ontological and generic status of the arts begins to slip. *Theatrum mundi* and the model of equal exchange associated with it therefore does not offer a sufficient guide for historical research into the use of theatrical elements in the arts and architecture. In a similar way, tracing the use of theatrical elements in the arts throws new light on the tradition of the *paragone*. Like the *theatrum mundi* topos, this presupposed a fundamental equivalence or similarity between the arts. In its formulations by Horace, and even more by Plutarch, the equation of poetry and painting rested on their equal power to achieve *enargeia*, lifelike, vivid representation. According to classical rhetoric this was one of the main instruments of persuasion.²⁹ This equivalence was challenged by Lessing who argued in the *Laocoön* that the pictorial and text-based arts differ fundamentally. But at the same time, he returned in his plays to the issue of the fraught relation between representation and presence, not to revive the rhetorical view that the dissolution of representation into what it represents is the supreme means of persuasion, but to redefine such vividness and its effect on the public as an epistemological and moral problem. The issues that arise when theatrical elements are used in the visual arts and architecture force us to rethink the relations between the theatre, the visual arts, and the ways in which they represent the worlds outside their artistic domains.

Notes

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- 1 Carlo Ridolfi, *Le Maraviglie dell'Arte* [1648], ed. Detlev von Hagen, Berlin, 1919–24, vol. 1, 315: 'Pregiatissimi pianti, pretiose perle, che liquefatte nel lambico del cuore al fuoco d'un ardente affetto haveste, virtù di lavar le macchie d'un inveterato errore. La mensa è situato nel seno di maestoso Teatro, nel cui circuito girano molte colonne ...'. Cf. Carlo Ridolfi, *The Life of Titian*, ed. Julia and Peter Bondanella, Peter Cole, and John. Shiffman, trans. Julia and Peter Bondanella, University Park, PA, 1996, 91.
- 2 David Rosand, *Painting in Cinquecento Venice*: Titian, Veronese, Tintoretto, New Haven and London, 1982, 150–82.
- 3 Rosand, *Painting in Cinquecento Venice*, 160.
- 4 Aleotti in the dedication of his design for the tragic scene in the Farnese theatre: 'ben si sà, ch'ella è teatro vivo, in cui tutte le eroiche virtù rappresentano magnanime e generose azioni' (quoted after Bruno Adorni, *L'architettura farnesiana a Parma, 1545–1630*, Parma, 1974, 73).
- 5 See David Rosand, *Painting in Cinquecento Venice*, 1982, 150–82; on Piranesi and the Bibbiena see A. Jarrard, 'Perspectives on Piranesi and theater', in Sarah Lawrence, ed., *Piranesi as Designer*, New York, 2007, 203–21; on

French eighteenth century and the theatre Germain Boffrand, *Book of Architecture*, ed. and introduced by Caroline van Eck, trans. David Britt, Aldershot, 2002, xviii–xix.

- 6 On the origins of *thea* and *theoria* see H. Rausch, *Theoria: Von ihrer sakralen zur philosophischen Bedeutung*, Munich, 1982, and D. Wachsmuth, chapter on *theoria* in A. F. von Pauly, K. Ziegler and W. Sontheimer, eds, *Der kleine Pauly: Lexikon der Antike*, Munich, 1975, vol. 5, 730–1.
- 7 Entry 'theatros' in Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, eds, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford, 1968, 787.
- 8 Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, Cambridge, MA, 1963. On the history of anti-theatrical attitudes see Jonas Barish, *The Anti-Theatrical Prejudice*, Berkeley, CA, 1981.
- 9 Lord Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Douglas den Uyl, Indianapolis, IN, 2001, vol. 3, 7.
- 10 Entry 'theatrum' (II.1 and 2) in Walther von Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, Basel, 1966, vol. 13, 300.
- 11 Günther Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt. Körper, Sprache und Bild im Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main and Basel, 2000, 13–22.
- 12 For an overview of definitions of theatricality within theatre studies see the special issue on theatricality of *Theatre Research International*, 20, 2, 1995, in particular Erika Fischer-Lichte, 'Introduction: Theatricality: a key concept in theatre and cultural studies', 85–9.
- 13 For a general and recent overview, see Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis, 'Theatricality: an introduction', in Thomas Postlewait and Tracy C. Davis, eds, *Theatricality*, Cambridge, 2003, 1–39.
- 14 For a recent survey of twentieth-century interactions between theatre and the arts and theatricality see Manuel Borja-Villel, ed., *A Theater without Theater*, exh. cat., Barcelona, 2007.

- 15 Josette Feral, 'Theatricality: the specificity of theatrical language', *SubStance*, 31: 2–3, 2002, 97.
- 16 On the origins of Greek theatre see most recently Eric Csapo and Margaret Miller, eds, *The Origins of Theater in Ancient Greece and Beyond*, Cambridge and New York, 2008. In his biography of Gottfried Semper, Harry Malgrave has argued that many of Nietzsche's ideas about the origins of Greek theatre were inspired by conversations with Semper, or by ideas first published Semper's *Der Stil* of 1863: the roots of architecture and theatre in ephemeral festivals in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE for instance, and the importance of Dionysian frenzy as the origin of new art forms. See Harry F. Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper. Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London, 1996, 339–55. For the unique case of a playwright turned architect see Frank McCormick, *Sir John Vanbrugh: The Playwright as Architect*, University Park, PA, 1991; Timothy Mowl, 'Antiquaries, theatre and early medievalism', in Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams, eds, *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690–1740*, Thrupp, 2000, 71–93; and Vaughan Hart, *Sir John Vanbrugh. Storyteller in Stone*, New Haven and London, 2008, 27–45.
- 17 Alberti, *De Pictura* § 42; Cicero, *De Oratore* III. lvi. 23.
- 18 George Kernodle, *From Art to Theatre: Form and Convention in the Renaissance*, Chicago, IL, 1943, 52–108.
- 19 Reindert Falkenburg, 'The Devil is in the detail: Ways of Seeing Joachim Patinir's "World Landscapes"', in A. Vergara, ed., *Patinir. Essays and Critical Catalogue*, exh. cat., Madrid, 2007, 61–81; 'Doorzien als esthetische ervaring bij Pieter Brueghel I en het vroeg-zestiende-eeuwse landschap', in Natasha Peters, ed., *De uitvinding van het landschap: Van Patinir tot Rubens 1520–1650*, Antwerpen, 2004, 53–65.
- 20 Ilja M. Veldman, 'Coornhert en de prentkunst', in H. Bongers, ed., *Dirk Volckertszoon Coornhert. Dwars maar recht*, Zutphen, 1989, 115–43 and Sheila Williams and Jean Jacquot, 'Ommegangs Anverso's du temps de Bruegel et de Van Heemskerck', in Jean Jacquot, ed., *Les fêtes de la Renaissance: Fêtes et cérémonies au temps de Charles Quint*, Paris, 1960, vol. 2, 359–88.
- 21 Pietro Aretino, *La Vita di S. Maria Vergine, di Catarina Santa, & di Tomaso Aquinato Beato Venice*, 1539, 152 ff., and *I Quattro Libri di la Humanità di Christo*, Venice, 1539, 63–75; cf. Una Roman d'Elia, *The Poetics of Titian's Religious Paintings*, Cambridge and New York, 2005, 107.
- 22 Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura di M. Lodovico Dolce, intitolato L'Aretino*, Venice, 1557, modern reprint in M. W. Roskill, *Dolce's 'Aretino' and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, Toronto, 2000 [1968], 120–1.
- 23 G. Comanini, *Il Figino, ovvero del Fine della Pittura*, in Paola Barocchi, ed., *Trattati d'Arte del Cinquecento*, Bari, 1962, vol. 3, 345 and 347: 'Della favola, dice il vostro Aristotele che ella dee essere una e rappresentante una sola azione d'un solo ... Corrisponde a questa unità di favola poetica l'unità dell'invenzione del buon pittore, il quale non dipinge dentro una tavola diversi azzioni, ma una sola. ... E quantunque l'Incendio di Borgo, ... abbia alcuni accidenti da me accennativi, co' quali par quasi che risomigli quello di Troia, ... Quale adunque sia l'unità dell'invenzion del pittore, corrispondente a l'unità della favola del poeta.' Cf. Valeska von Rosen, 'Die Enargeia des Gemäldes: Zu einem vergessenen Inhalt des Ut-pictura-poesis und seiner Relevanz für das cinquecenteske Bildkonzept', *Marburger Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, 27, 2000, 171–208. In 'Raphael's Incendio del Borgo', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 22, 1959, 41–51. Kurt Badt has argued that Raphael was doubly dependent on classical sources: on Vitruvius and Aristotle's *Poetics*, and that the composition of the fresco closely follows Aristotle's precepts for successful dramatic plotting. See also *Il Figino*, 345 for a comparison between painting and dramatic poetry: '... il pittore non cede punto al poeta nell'arte dell'imitare, anzi, che col medesimo artificio, col quale il poeta imita, imita anch'egli e finge le cose. E perchè io non vi sembri parlare a caso, poichè la pittura più rassomiglia la poesia rappresentativa che la narrativa, e tra le poesie rappresentative principale sappiamo essere la tragedia; io voglio che consideriamo tutte le parti di questo poema, non le quanto, che sono il prologo, l'episodio, l'essodo e'l coro, ma le quali, che sono la favola, i costumi, il verso, la sentenza, l'apparato e la melodia ...'
- 24 Cf. Thomas Puttfarcken, *The Discovery of Pictorial Composition: Theories of Visual Order in Painting 1400–1800*, New Haven and London, 2000, in particular 94ff.; Puttfarcken, 'Aristotle, Titian, and Tragic Painting', in Dana Arnold and Margaret Iversen, eds, *Art and Thought*, Oxford, 2003, 9–27; and Titian & Tragic Painting. Aristotle's Poetics and the Rise of the Modern Artist, New Haven and London, 2005, where he argues for a reading of Titian's late poesie in terms of Aristotle's *Poetics*.
- 25 In his doctoral thesis on Botticelli he quoted Burckhardt's remark that Italian festival art is the true transition from life into art: 'das Festwesen als wahren Übergang aus dem Leben in die Kunst' ('Sandro Botticellis "Geburt der Venus" und "Frühling"' [1893], in Horst Bredekamp and Michael Diers, eds, *Aby Warburg. Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike. Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance*, Berlin, 1998, 37); cf. 'Sandro Botticelli', in Bredekamp and Michael Diers, *Aby Warburg*, 66: 'Nicht der Gipsabguß, wohl aber der festliche Aufzug, indem heidnische Lebensformen eine Freistätte volkstümlichen Fortlebens sich bewahrt hatte, war der Form, in der die Gestalten des Altertums in den bunten Pracht bewußten Lebens vor dem Augen der Italienischen Gesellschaft leibhaftig wiedererstanden'.
- 26 On fiction, but unfortunately with little attention to fictionality in the visual arts see David Davies, 'Fiction', in Berys Gaut and Dominic McIver Lopes, eds, *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London and New York, 2001, 263–75; and Peter Lamarque, *Truth, Fiction, and Literature*, Oxford, 1994.
- 27 Denis Diderot, 'Salon de 1767', in Diderot, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. Laurent Versini, Paris, 1996, vol. 4, 595–635.
- 28 Diderot, 'Salon de 1767', 610.
- 29 On this issue in classical rhetoric see Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Arts in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge and New York, 2007, Introduction and Chapter III.